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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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POSSIBILITIES OF THE FUTURE.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—1 John iii. 2.

That would be a very poor heaven, and that would be a very ignoble existence, which could be fairly compassed by human thought. What kind of a commonwealth would that be which Abraham, in the early day that anteceded civil society, almost, could have understood? He was prepared to understand so little, that the sum of all that he could comprehend would have amounted to but a handful. What would that manhood be which a child could fully grasp and understand? How large would be a manhood which was no larger than a child's mind? A child can understand only according to the nature of its faculties. What would an art be that was no more than could be understood by a village paint-grinder? We see, all the while, even in our lower condition and limited development, how far things really transcend the capacity of one or another class to understand them.

And so, we are grateful when we find, in the Word of God, the recognition of the fact that that which is of the nature of perfection is quite incomprehensible to us; that we do not understand God himself; that we do not understand the heavenly state; that we do not understand what our own perfected natures ought to be, nor what they are who have risen and are among "the spirits of just men made perfect." The annunciation of our ignorance reassures and comforts us. For I should be sorry to have no grander God than that one which I can solve, and hold in my conception. I should be sorry to know that the future of the races of mankind would not be larger and nobler and better than anything that I can now take in by the utmost stretch of fancy or reason.

This is in clear and marked distinction from the spirit with

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which many teach, in modern times, and from the spirit with which men have taught in all times, for that matter. The impertinence of dogmatic assurance is nowhere more rebuked than in the writings of the inspired teachers of the New Testament. "Our life," it is said, "is hid with Christ in God." When he shall appear, then we shall appear. We are under him that does exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think. He is doing more than we can think, all the time. Paul declares that we see through a glass darkly, and know no more about the manhood of the life which is to come than a child knows about the manhood that now is; and that we cannot even tell what is the relative and what is the absolute in truth. Many things shall pass away. Some things are to abide. Some things are to remain as they are forever; as for instance hope and love.

"Why should not a disclosure which would be likely to be so influential as that of the absolute condition of the heavenly state have been made?" many will ask. How great a comfort it would be if the thousand questions which affection, and conscience, and hope, and sorrow throw into the heavenly land were solved! How effectual it would be for consolation and encouragement, and instruction, and strength in righteousness, if there might come forth an answer to these questions, so that we should know exactly where we stood and where we were to stand!

Now, all knowledge is measured by the attaining power of the human faculties. We do not know but there may be revelations coming to us all the time, which break on us as the waves break on unknown shores. One of the most startling things which Professor Tyndall told us, or revealed to us, in his lectures, was, that light, when analyzed by the spectrum, had beams in it which were black to our eye, but which were formerly unknown elements. They had been pouring down upon us and acting on us undiscovered, in spite of the research of philosophers through ages; and it was only just lately that it was found out that they existed. How much of the universe is poured on us simply to find want of appreciation, and want of sensibility to apprehend that which is made known! The quality and the quantity of the understanding power in man determines how much can be revealed to him.

This is a fact which explains much of what men stumble over in regard to divine revelation; for it has been supposed that the revelation of God would be one that would take all the things of the spirit and shape them into crystalline accuracy, and put them beyond all cavil before men; whereas, it is a revelation which is relative to the unfolding process of human life and of nature. As the eye increases

in power, it is able to bear more and more light; and as the power of apprehension in men has increased they have been able to take in more and more truth. And the Word of God has been given to the world little by little. Small were the elements that were revealed at first. These elements have grown as men grew. And revelation has not preceded comprehension, but has rather followed it; because men cannot understand faster than they have the capacity to understand.

My dog, that waits for me, and throws himself into ecstatic postures when I come home—I know he loves me. He obeys me. He fears me. I long to help the poor creature. I long to break up that restraint in him which keeps him from rising into a higher knowledge of me. I am conscious that he leaves out the largest part of me, after all. When he comes and covers me with caresses, it is all very well, as far as it goes; it is the best that a dog can do; but I should be sorry if I thought we were not more than a dog could understand. That which he does understand, and which he loves and obeys, is that which is nearest in communion with him. It is the animal in me that he solves and comes into sympathy with.

I can understand how men, looking up, longing and yearning to know something of the other life, may be in as pitiable a plight, from being incapable, by the exercise of their inward nature, of taking hold of the subtler and higher forms of spiritual life, as an animal is in its longings and yearnings to understand human life, with which it is in sympathy, but which it cannot comprehend by reason of its limited capacities. There is not enough of man in the lower animals to enable them to understand man; and there is not enough of God in men to enable them to understand God.

The grand fact, then, on which all reasoning in respect to final states must proceed, is this: that man is not a creature complete and ended, but is a being who is in a state of change and progress, as is distinctly recognized in the Word of God; and that all teaching must conform to that universal and fundamental principle of evolution which is going on in the understanding and moral parts of human nature.

You cannot reveal faster than men are themselves developed. Throughout the Bible the kingdom of heaven is described as a grain of mustard-seed, beginning small, and growing larger and larger. The figure of the building, from which our verb *to edify* and the term *edification* substantially come, carries with it the same idea of beginning, and progress, and development, and final completion. All those words and figures, latent or apparent, in Scripture,

which imply the growth of man, are based upon the same facts. And childhood and manhood, when they are put in opposition to each other, convey the same idea which is contained in the great fundamental truth that men begin at the bottom, and gradually unfold, and grow more and more, and that they cannot understand a subsequent state by that which they have in a foregoing or previous one.

With such a basis, let us inquire into some of the particulars which show why "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." After the teaching of the sanctuary or the temple; after the teaching of the prophets and priests; after the teaching of the Saviour himself, of the apostles and of the holy men that have been subsequently moved by the Spirit, why is it that at last men cannot say "I know," in respect to their future state? Why is it yet true that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be" in the heavenly land? We know very little of ourselves here; and nothing is more unknown than man in his relations to time and to matter, and of the possibilities of man as a physical creature still less is known. The very knowing faculties are not themselves yet quite well studied. We hear that science is skeptical and doubting; and science does doubt many things; but there is nothing that science doubts so much as it does the senses. They are on probation all the time. In the laboratory, upon the anatomist's bench, in those places where instruments are employed for exploring the stellar universe, wherever scientific thought is at work, there the senses are doubted, and are forever being cross-questioned. So that men who know the most about the senses are the least likely to take their reports. We do not yet know how to use the eye, the ear, or the hand, so that they are infallible; or so that they even approximate infallibility. Before we accept their testimony we test them again and again, and again; and watch the variations of their action, and exclude one after another of its results, till by repetition we come to something that we feel to be reliable.

Now, if we know so little of men in their higher state, how little can we know of them in their divine condition! How little can we know of what they might be brought to, or of what they might attain!

The relations of all the elements which center in man to make a perfect manhood in this world are very little understood. In the light of a thousand ages which concentrate upon to-day, how little can any physiologist reveal in respect to the irregularities that are taking place in the human system! How little can he know about them! Men who know the most, walk as it were, upon a path

scarcely wider than the edge of a knife-blade; and the least jar throws them from their equipoise of knowledge, and they find themselves on every side in ignorance.

How little can we control the conditions of life, for example! How little do we know what are the influences which are working upon this organization, that is subject to our inspection, our analysis, our dissection! How little can men know in respect to those things which relate to mankind here! How little can they know as to how far they may travel in one direction or another without violating the economies on which health and virtue stand! How little can they determine as to the best method of developing the race so as that they shall perpetually increase in those qualities which are good, and transmit them with some intelligence and some aim? We know that there is a law of transmission; we know that there is a right way and a wrong way in this regard; but how perfectly empirical is all science that undertakes to transmit to another generation a nobler race of men! For, much as education may do; vast as is the efficacy of culture upon men, there is something that is larger than that—namely, the original constitution—the beginning of the race.

A time must come, on the earth, when men shall begin and end a thousand degrees farther along than they do now; but as it is, how many men drag themselves through life with wounded faculties, and minds distorted and ill-balanced! How many men come into the world, as it were, on purpose to be shown off in the most fantastic guises! How little do men know of human nature, so as to secure, even in this life, a noble, manly, virtuous, Christian race of men! And it is probable, when we know so little of the most approachable characteristics of mankind in this world, that we shall be able to understand or foresee the higher estates in the world to come? How probable, nay, how certain the ignorance is! If we know so little of man when we study the elements which belong to his lower nature, how much less must we know of him when we study the elements which belong to his higher nature! If it is so difficult for us to understand him in his physical and more approachable nature, how much more difficult must it be for us to have the slightest comprehension of his development in other climes, and in other conditions!

Take, for instance, the evolution of any of the faculties. How little does any man now understand of the possibilities of the intellectual development of great men. All men, we know, have intellects that can be played upon like thermometers, which receive heat or cold, and rise or fall, but which never make heat nor cold!

The mass of mankind have enough sensibility to receive ideas when they are put upon them by forces from without. But we know that here and there a man is found who *develops* a power in himself. He originates it there.

There is one step that we see in advance where the originating, developing power has a great purpose, and the man is called *a genius*. For instance, of him that can perceive, when it is shown that two and two make four, it is said, "He has some arithmetical intellect;" but how very soon does the common mind run out even in its power of receiving the truth of figures—the simplest and most common forms of truth! Now and then we find one who is quick in figures. Then we find one that is quicker. At length we come to men who originate in the direction of mathematics. By-and-by there rises up a single man who has power high above these, and so spires up into the heaven that he disappears among the clouds. All this goes to show what a range there is in the development of one part of the intellect.

Almost anybody can come home and describe a scene which he has witnessed in the street; as, for instance, the absurd posture of animals, where they scatter and run from each other. Every one, almost, can describe a dispute which he hears on some corner. All men are dramatists to a certain extent. Even the child is a dramatist; but he exhausts his capacity in a narrow measure. When, however, we come to dramatists professional, on such a scale as Shakespeare, to whom all mankind were as to us are the grass, the flowers and the trees, and who looked upon them, and painted what he saw; when we consider what a development of the intellect is possible in other directions, as illustrated by cases such as those of Newton among astronomers, and Bacon among philosophers, and Leibnitz, Descartes and Spinoza in their departments; and going farther back, Aristotle and Plato—when we call up before us such notable natures as these, we have some conception of what is possible to the human understanding, though not one in a million or ten million has reached it. And suppose the fullest development had taken place throughout the race, suppose mankind were unfolded to the limit of the capacity indicated by the development of such men as these, how different would the world be from anything that we can now understand in man! We have only twilight intimations on this subject.

There were times when the great mass of mankind were so unintelligent that it was superlative folly for philosophers or wise men to say anything to them. They could not understand it. When we speak of common schools and common churches, for

greater education, we think we are speaking of things which shall develop what power there is in public intelligence and universal intellectual elevation and culture, which is changing the face of nations and of the world, and which by-and-by is to recreate the intellectual conditions of mankind; but how little do we yet know of these things! We only have hints thereof.

Consider how little we know of the moral faculties. We know a great deal of them unquestionably. We have come, through happy experience, to a knowledge of rightness, justice, conscience, truth, hope, faith, veneration. All these prime moral qualities we have a certain knowledge of, which we have gained in life. But who knows the limit to which they may be carried? Who knows what they may become in fineness and in quality by development? Who, for example, that has seen only the harsh and rugged edge of justice in this world, can state what justice will be when it is the supremest expression of kindness? It is not the expression of kindness now. Far more often it is vindictive. Not unfrequently it is hunger for blood. Justice, as it exists among men, indispensable as it is, is vastly crude and imperfect. How little have men ever run their thoughts along the line of the possibilities of justice till they perceived it in such a state that, while it led them to recognize the dignity and importance of rectitude, it yet nourished them in their imperfections, and carried them on and up?

Imagination we have seen developed so that it played around ordinary life with a thousand little fancies and graces in the household. We have seen the imagination carried up by the artist, by the musician, by the poet, by the orator. We have been helped in a variety of ways to form a conception of the range which the imagination may have through development.

How little, however, have we enlarged our conception of the moral sentiments, so as to know what they may be brought to by evolution!

How, then, shall we understand what we shall be hereafter? When the prime qualities of our existence are easily understood here, and when, under present conditions, they are so absolutely incapable of their full development, how are we to know what their probable growth is to be either in time or eternity? When you consider these inherent difficulties which lie in the way of human development, how much more impossible will it appear to be to conceive of what will be the result of the combination of all these noble faculties in men when they are developed and perfected!

There is hardly any child that cannot understand a whistle; but if you combine two or four instruments with a whistle, carry-

ing different parts which work towards an orchestra, how soon the child is lost! He may hear the body of sound, but he cannot analyze it. It leaves him behind. And the combinations into harmonies—can he understand them? He understands a ballad, and perhaps enjoys it; but when the piece is played in two parts, or in four parts, how few there are that can enter into the full conception of the combination of sounds, as they march in the majesty of the symphonies of Beethoven, where it seems almost as though the voices of creation had been brought into discipline, and were moved by his suggestion and his touch! We are lost the moment we begin to make complexity or combination. If we cannot understand intellectual elements nor moral elements in their single capacity, how much less can we understand them in their combination, when they are all perfected and brought into complete harmony with each other!

To this must be added what we shall be when the body is dropped. If there is anything that the Scripture teaches unequivocally, I think it is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. They who think that the body will live must have a queer idea of bodies; for if there are to be bodies, they are to have neither flesh nor blood; and when you have taken away all flesh and blood, my idea of a body is gone. That which I understand the Scripture to teach unequivocally is, that that which is matter abides on this material globe, and that that which is spiritual and ineffable departs and abides in the other life. Who can tell or imagine what would be the effect of existing in a state in which there was no need of eating, no need of drinking, no need of watching; in which there was no weariness in labor; in which all necessity of supplying the appetite was gone?

When men speed across the sea, there is that vast enginery down in the hold of the vessel, which clamps night and day, and seems to be treading with giant footsteps, as it moves on its journey; but who can conceive of a voyage in which one is borne forward without an engine, without any jarring, moving softly through the ambient spaces of the air? And while man is living in this life subject to all its ailments and down-pullings and hindrances of every kind, who can conceive what he will be when his spirit wings its way upward, and leaves these encumbrances behind which have had so much to do with sinning in this life? The body, and all that belongs to it, will sleep in the grave, and the spirit will go forth in might and symmetry, and will indeed be a "new creature."

Consider one other thing—namely, the social element. Consider what a power there is in it of development. How much music

inspires music! How easy it is for the current to go where single drops could not move! Men tend, I think, in all great periods of development, to go forward by a certain enthusiastic movement of the whole.

Now, transfer that quality to spirits whose elementary faculties have been developed and perfected, who are cut loose from the hindrances of the body, and who are translated to another sphere where all of society is alike—where there is a common intelligence, a common moral sentiment, and a common national life; where there are none to molest or make afraid; where none sin and none attempt to sin; where the whole public sentiment in which the soul lives and moves is one of rectitude, and purity, and love, and aspiration, and glorifying worship.

Finally, and above all, consider how undeniable are those elements of truth which glint from out of the Apocalypse. Consider what that condition must be where God stands personal and disclosed in the midst of ransomed, elevated spirits, and pours the light of his presence upon souls that at last have been so developed that they can see him as he is, and are like him, and know as they are known.

In the early days of spring we plant seeds in the hot-house; we nourish them with artificial heat; we bring them forward so that after the spring is somewhat advanced, and the frosts have retired, and the ground has become warm, we can take them out, and put them in their true soil. So when we have been nourished for a season in this sphere, we are to be brought forward, by the goodness of God, to that sphere where the Sun of righteousness will shine upon us in full flame—not where we shall be surrounded by the undistinguishable and unknown and unknowable, but where we shall be to the Lord what children are to parents, or what friends are to friends. We shall see him face to face.

See how clear now, in the light of this thought, comes out the passage of our text,

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Blessings on the apostle for that one word! It carries with it a magisterial idea. Now that we are the sons of God, the higher things rule the lower; and higher than anything else—Paul being our witness—are faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love. The relation is to be that of sonship. We are to come, not into the relationship of magisterial power, nor of justice, nor of vengeance, but of love; and the center of the universe is love; and the farther we go toward that conceptual perfection, the nearer we shall be like God. We have the hint of love here, but we are to see its full disclosure in the world to come.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

We are on this side in the beginning of it; and when we reach the other side; when we have sloughed the chaff in which we grew; when we are wheat gathered into the eternal garner; when we are where all parts of our nature are effluent and effulgent; when we are in a society whose public sentiment nourishes and helps us; when we are in a sphere where God himself is personally present—though it doth not yet appear what we shall be then, it is because it is too high, too large, for any man to think of in this mortal state. "We know"—ah! what is it that we know, in this vast realm where we do not know? Well, "we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." How have we been seeing him, then, through all our lifetime? We have been seeing him under shapes, and figures, and parables. Sometimes he represents himself to us as a Lion, and sometimes as an Eagle. Sometimes his voice is the thunder, and sometimes his eye is the lightning. But that is not all. Sometimes he comes to us, and says, "I am a Road: walk on me." At other times he comes as the brown loaf, and says, "Eat me." At other times he trickles musically past us, and says, "I am the River of life: drink of me." Sometimes he says, "I am a Star." Sometimes he says, "I am a King crowned." Sometimes he says, "I am a Victor—a Captain." Sometimes he says that he is one thing, and sometimes another. Round and round the earth goes the spirit of instruction and inspiration, pouring out things which give to a man some hints (you cannot give him much more), some slight notion of the vastness of that God who fills all space, all time, all eternity. And so, when we think of him, sometimes we think of him as a Father; sometimes as a Brother; sometimes as a Comforter; sometimes as a Leader; sometimes as a Judge; sometimes as a King; sometimes as one thing and sometimes as another. These, however, are only images, symbols, giving us intimations of qualities; but by-and-by we shall see him as he is. The limitation of human faculty shall not prevent our knowing what God is. Now, we have no conception of his form or of his glory except from the most insignificant sources; but the time is coming when we shall go home as sons of God, and shall be changed, throwing off the raiment and chains of slaves—for we have been in bondage; the time is coming when we shall be emancipated, and shall stand in the presence of God; and then we shall no longer go by hints and notions. "We shall see him as he is."

To-day, if you would see the Acropolis, you must go and look at the masses of its ruins. You can see the crumbling walls; you

can see a few battered columns that sustained the portico; you can see broken capitals that have been thrown down, one here and another there; but you are left to restore by your imagination the structure as it must have looked when adorned with all the statues that Phidias carved. You have perhaps seen casts or originals of such as remain of these statues, but they are mere fragments of the magnificent whole; and so you gather them together, and fashion in your mind some conception of that whole.

If sleeping, some night, the archæolgist or photographer, who had been laboring among these gigantic ruins, and who had become deeply interested in his work, should see rising above him in the light of the moon the Parthenon, perfect, as it was in the palmy days of Athens, without a flaw, every line true, every part symmetrical, beautiful beyond description, that would be glorious in a small way; but oh! how poor a simile that is of the transformation which awaits our vision when we shall go hence! Here we have been picking up fragmentary ideas of God, distorted, ill-mated, exaggerated in one way, and shrunk unduly in another; and we have hardly been able to put them together, such is the low state of human society and human character in this world; but what will our conception of him be when we shall stand and see him as he is?

We must, then, in looking back upon this truth, distinguish between that ignorance which comes from excess of riches, and that ignorance which comes from excess of poverty. If the reason why we know so little of the other life was that there was little to be known, it would be discouraging; but if the reason why "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," is that we are to be exalted to such rank, and dignity, and power, and bounty, and symmetry, and beauty, that it cannot enter into the conception of man in this lower and imperfect state, then ours is a poverty for which we are to thank God. That is to say, the ignorance which comes from such poverty is one which inspires us with hope and gladness as we look forward into the future.

If we could cull life; if here the poets might be gathered, and there the true speakers, and there the noble-hearted philanthropists, and there the geniuses in execution; if the men endowed with superior elements in the various walks of life could be brought into social relations on earth, we could imagine a circle well-nigh divine. And yet the imagination kindled by some such state of things would be twilight in comparison to that where everything is perfected, where everything is pure, where everything is enduring, where the air is balmy, and where the divine presence overshines the whole with beauty and ecstacy forever and forever. Heaven is

not a place where you shall stand like forty wax candles in two rows, or where your only occupation shall be that of going through mechanical genuflexions; but when all that is forceful in virtue, in thought, in moral sentiment, in genius, is expanded, amplified, and made glorious, then the heavens will be full of those who are moving every whither, endowed with life and power, and who are endlessly outpouring the grandest effects.

Although we do not know, yet that which glimmers tends to fill us with hope and with joy. It is not necessary that the sun should rise before the watcher is refreshed and comforted. Through the long night she has been watching; she is weary; she wonders when the day will dawn; and in some chance moment she looks forth through the door, and the whole east is changing from black to gray, and from gray to the pearly tint; and to her the night is past, to her the day has come, though it be an hour before the sun rises. And so it is not necessary that we should actually see these things; it is not necessary that we should know them very accurately. The knowledge that we are sons of God; the knowledge that we are called to glory; the knowledge that by-and-by we shall rise from the realm of the senses into the realm of the spirit—this is comforting. It is a source of joy and satisfaction to know that we are to let go all that which constitutes the external form, and to hold fast to that which constitutes the interior man.

If these things are so, what matters it how little we have in this life? If we are sure that the other life is life, and not a slumbering hole in the ground; if death is but the opening of the gate; if dying is translation; if passing from sentience here we reach a higher sentience there, one can almost bear anything in this life. "Christ, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame;" and the joy that is set before us, if fully revealed to us, would enable every man, methinks, to endure the cross and despise the shame. It is the unknown life to come that cheers and blesses the known life that now is. For this is an orphaned life. Here we are helpless, or like stumbling children, with little strength and little experience; but we are living toward our manhood; and every year that we leave behind us is one station on the road over which we have passed; and every day the very dust that annoys us, and the very cinders that vex our summer eyes, are so many witnesses of the speed with which we are crossing that territory which separates between us and ours; between our seeming life and our real life; between the life that now is and the life that is to come.

Some light is thrown, by this exposition, on the question which

is so much asked and so little answered—a question that comes up from silent mothers' hearts all over the world, as white bubbles come up everywhere seeking the surface of the lake or of the sea—namely, "Shall I know my friends? Shall I know my children? Will my babes be my babes, and will my friends be my friends?" "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but I do not believe, for one, that God has thought it necessary to keep my babes babes till I come to heaven, for the sake of pleasing me. Babes that God takes are more than mighty princes on earth. They must grow. All that I ask is that they shall fill the same place in my heart when I get there that they did here; and that they will, I am sure, only in a greater measure.

Would you, then, for the sake of personal identity merely carry up the identity of the body? Is there not an identity of the soul? Is there not a personal identity of the nobler part?

As respects the knowledge of friendship, I believe that friendship is insoluble and indestructible. I believe, if it is true, and is kindled in the higher realm of the soul, that it is one of those things which cannot be rubbed out or effaced. It is written as if with the point of a diamond. The love that God makes to hover over the cradle, the love that God makes to abide in the companionship of life, so subtle and compact with various riches to which every day is contributing golden thoughts, and sweet affections, and noble fancies—that love is not going to be lost.

The body shall slumber here. What you are to be without a body, I cannot imagine; and what I am to be without a body, you cannot imagine; but of this I am sure, that in that land where I am to know as I am known, I shall know that there is nothing which I have lost that I shall not find with interest, and compound interest, in the other life. That life will be what you yearn for and pray for; and God will give it to you in such measure that you will say, "Thou art the God that does exceeding abundantly more than I asked or thought." And she that goes weeping to the grave, to lay there her babe, and mourn through months and years, shall say, when God gives back that babe, "God, Father, is it all mine?" Yes, it will be all hers. When God is mine, and I am an heir with Christ, what is there that shall not be mine?

Every one of us will know each other in heaven. Every one of us will be nobler in heaven than we are here. The sensibilities of this poor, dim earth are no interpretation of the sensibilities of heaven. The great march of men through this life is scarcely a hint of the volume, the vastness, the magnitude, the grandeur, of that march, in procession, of soul with soul, through the eternal

ages. Whatever we do not know, one thing we do know, and that is, that we shall go to heaven, not to shrink with age, to find poverty, and to find distortion, but to find riches, and symmetry, and to develop into all the glory of everlasting youth. All that populates our fancy with ideal perfectness, and more, will be there. The noblest conception, the most rapt vision of the most ecstatic saint or seer, will be more than outdone. Heaven will be larger, heaven will be richer, heaven will be happier, and the glory of God will be more transcendant than it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. Toward it we are being swept with an irresistible impulse. For I believe that, besides our own life, there is a great current of forces in which we are swinging upward and onward toward the invisible sphere. As the traveler on earth has a double journey; as in addition to the journey which he is himself making, he is swept along by the earth in its revolutions; so I believe that the human race is being swept in vast aerial circles toward better climes and nobler societies. Whatever may be done by tears, by sorrows, by temptations, by weariness, by study, by toil, there is something better than all that. The irresistible power of God is carrying the universe upward and onward to its final perfection and glorification.

Take courage, then. Look up. Listen. The voice of God calls to his suffering ones, and says, "Ye are my sons." Listen again. The Revelator says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

Our heavenly Father, we rejoice that so many hear thy voice, and are obedient to its call, and, though weak in themselves, are made stronger by thy Spirit, to begin and to continue the divine life, in the midst of all the environments and temptations of this mortal state. We commend to thy Fatherly care those who have been brought out of their darkness, who have, this day, in the midst of their brethren, made a profession of their faith in Christ Jesus, and who have entered into fellowship and covenant with this his people, and are to walk with them in the same faith, in the same hope, and in the same aspiration for eternal life. Will the Lord be gracious unto them severally? For thou knowest what is the battle that is appointed for each. Thou knowest what adversaries every one will have to contend with. All of them need the guidance, the strength, that is from on high—the divine Spirit. Grant that every one of them may have that light and that comfort which that Spirit gives. May they not be left to themselves in hours of weakness and in hours when they are tempted in over-measure. Let them not be suffered to despond nor to become discouraged. May they be steadfast in purpose. And may their hearts be renewed, and filled again and again with the divine Spirit. And so, through light and through darkness, through smooth ways and through rough ways, may they press forward, and prosper, unto the end of this mortal life. Comfort them in all their tribulations. More and more make them to understand how little this life is, and yet how much—how little in itself, and how much in that to which it ministers. May they use it as not abusing it—as the gift of God—as that which is bearing them onward and upward to a nobler life. May they rejoice in the will of God. May they be ready to accomplish whatever may be thy righteous purpose in them. May they abound in all gentleness, and goodness, and kindness. May they have the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, overcoming iniquity, and transgression and sin in those who are around about them.

May such as are parents know how to rear their households for God. May such as are yet young know how to grow up into a true spiritual manhood, rejoicing in the Lord, who is their Leader.

We pray that thou wilt grant that this solemn dedication which they have made of themselves may not be unmeaning. May it bring forth fruit. Even as the spring grows stronger and brighter, and waxes toward the summer, so may this day be but the beginning, the germinating hour of a life of blessedness to be developed in them. May they bring forth the pleasant fruits of righteousness; and may the heart of God rejoice over them and in them.

We pray that their life may be sustained, and that when they shall come to die, they may enter upon an experience of peace, and joy, and gladness, forever.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon all those who have witnessed this spectacle. May such as have faith in Jesus renew, to-day, their consecration, their hope, and their gladness in Him.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt cause thy blessing to rest upon all the families that are represented here. If there be any who are standing under clouds, with sickness and afflictions of various names, wasting their happiness, from day to day, we pray that the presence of the Comforter may be with them, and that they may be strengthened to carry their trouble and their burden till the Lord shall see fit to remove it. If there be those in thy presence who are conscious that the cares of life wear upon them, that the

* Immediately following the reception of members into the church.

yoke is not easy, and that the burden is not light, may they hear the voice and the promise of Him that calls them to his service; and may they find, at last, in Him, the realization of all his promises.

We pray for those who are standing in the midst of prosperity, that they may be delivered from pride, from selfishness, from self-indulgence, and from all the snares and dissipations which the heart practices upon men.

We pray that thou wilt grant that those in our midst who are laboring in word and doctrine, and are bearing out to the ignorant the tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, may be abundantly blessed in their work. We thank thee that to-day we see the fruit of their fidelity, and the answer to their prayers; and we pray that still they may go on laboring, having their faith increased, inasmuch as the Word is not without power, and the promises of God are not void, but are Yea and Amen.

We pray that this church may be augmented, not only in numbers, but in the power of Christian grace. May all those who have named the name of Christ bear the likeness of Christ, and his temper and spirit, in themselves.

We pray for the outcast; for the vicious; for the criminal; for those that are sick; for those that are in prison; for those that are far from home; for those that are strangers among strangers. Will the Lord bless them all to-day.

And bless, we beseech of thee, the whole Israel of God. Remember thy churches of every name, wherever they may be. Purge them from error. Imbue them more plentifully from on high with the spirit of the Master. We beseech of thee that the cause of God may be advanced in all the earth; that ignorance may flee from intelligence as the night from the morning; and that knowledge may bring in virtue; and that virtue may bring in true piety; and that all the earth may see thy salvation.

We ask it in the name of the Beloved, to whom, with the Father and the Spirit, shall be praises, evermore. *Amen.*

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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